

## A STUDY ON THE VENUES OF SUICIDE

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### ABSTRACT

*This study was aimed to assess the venues of suicide and the related factors. One hundred and forty four (M-89, F-55) suicide cases undertaken for autopsy at the department of Forensic Medicine, Madras Medical College formed the study material. 33.71% of males and 3.64% of females had chosen the venues other than their houses. Most of the males suffering from mental illness (80%) had preferred places outside their house for this fatal act. Among the males, 71.74% of those who consumed insecticides and 87.5% who adopted self immolation, did so inside their houses. Comparatively lesser (53.33%) proportion of males resorted to hanging inside their houses.*

*Key words: suicide, methods, sites, forensic*

Research on suicide and its related factors could help us not only to understand this complex behaviour, but also to effectively institute the preventive and other management strategies. Of the different factors pertaining to suicide in India, which have been the focus of many studies (Aiyappan & Jayadev, 1956; Sathyavathi & Murti Rao, 1961; Ganapathy & Venkoba Rao, 1966; Nandi et al., 1979; Ponnudurai & Jayakar, 1980; Hegde, 1980; Shukla et al., 1990; Banerjee et al., 1990; Sarma & Sawang, 1993) the venue of suicide had drawn relatively less attention. It is worthwhile to mention that the venue of suicide might offer us a clue, besides the individual's psychological states, about the intensity of the suicidal intent also. Hence, a study on the suicide venue might be one of the worthwhile exercises which could help to formulate suicide prevention strategies.

The present study was aimed to assess the venues chosen by the individuals with completed suicide and the related factors.

### MATERIAL AND METHOD

All consecutive cases where death was declared to be due to suicide by police investigations, and undertaken for autopsy in the year 1992 at the department of Forensic Medicine, Madras Medical College, were taken up for this investigation. Besides the police records, the opinion of the forensic experts who conducted the postmortem examination was also obtained for the confirmation of the nature of death

and for other relevant informations. One hundred and fifty five (M-99, F-56) cases were thus chosen.

Of the 99 males, only for 89 the place of suicide could be ascertained, and likewise, of the 56 females, for one the venue was not known. Ultimately, the total sample analysed was 144 (M-89, F-55).

### RESULTS

Of the males, thirty (33.71%) were found to have preferred places outside their houses for their self destruction. On the contrary only two females (3.64%) had preferred the places outside their houses for this act (see Table), and of them, one who was suffering from depressive illness chose the hospital where she was undergoing treatment, by hanging herself. Interestingly, of those who chose the site for this fatal act outside their houses, four males and one female managed to reach their houses after consuming the poisons.

The most preferred places for the males outside their houses were hotel rooms (7.87%), rivers (6.74%) and working places (4.5%). Other notable sites were railway station, park and water tank. The venues inside the houses were bathrooms, verandah and other rooms.

Among the males, 71.74% of insecticide poisoning and 87.5% of burning resorted to inside their houses. Noteworthy observation was comparatively lesser frequency (53.33%) of hanging inside the houses.

**TABLE**  
**VENUES AND MODES OF SUICIDE**

MODE	INSIDE THE HOUSE		OUTSIDE THE HOUSE N=32, M=30 (33.71); F=2 (3.64)							
	N=112, M=59; F=53		HOTEL		RIVER		WORKING PLACE		OTHER PLACES	
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F
Insecticides	33 (71.74)	17 (100)	5 (10.87)	-	2 (4.35)	-	-	-	6 (13.04)	-
Hanging 8	12 (53.33)	2 (92.31)	- (13.33)	-	-	3	-	2 (20)	1 (13.33)	7 (69)
Burning 7	14 (87.5)	- (100)	-	-	-	1	-	- (12.5)	-	-
Acid Ingestion	5 (100)	4 (100)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Sleeping/Other tablets	3 (100)	4 (100)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Oleander seeds	1 (33.33)	2 (66.67)	-	-	-	-	-	-	2 (66.67)	1 (33.33)
Drowning	-	-	-	-	4 (80)	-	-	-	1 (20)	-
Copper 2 sulphate (100)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Jumping - from height	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	- (100)	-
<b>TOTAL</b>	59 (66.29)	53 (96.36)	7 (7.87)	-	6 (6.74)	-	4 (4.5)	-	13 (14.61)	2 (3.64)

Figures in parenthesis indicate percentage

Analysis of the causative factors for the male suicides showed that out of the five who had mental illness, four (80%) selected the sites outside their house. Further, in this investigation, of the 6 cases who jumped into the rivers, 3 had mental illness and one was substance abuser. Also, of the 2 who had jumped from a height to end their lives, one had mental illness.

## DISCUSSION

Our observation that only a few women compared to men preferred the suicide venues outside their houses reflect our sociocultural traditions which inhibits the movement of women outside their houses freely. The return of those soon after their self harm-

ing attempt perhaps indicate that they preferred to be rescued or desired to be in their places of abode near their kith and kin at the time of their death or wanted to reconcile with the family members before their death.

The lesser frequency of hanging inside the houses in comparison to the other common modes might be due to the realisation of the consequences likely to ensue due to the widely held belief in our culture that after the death by hanging, the individual's ghost will continue to haunt their place. Despite noting that 30 of the 35 who died by hanging did so inside a room, Shukla *et al.* (1990) have not outlined the location of these rooms. However, they have noted that the remaining five (4 males, 1 female) hanged

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themselves from trees.

Our finding that 80% of the males who had mental illness selected the venues outside their houses might plead for crisis intervention measures whenever patients suffering from mental illness venture out of their houses with distress signals.

Sathyavathi and Murti Rao (1962) noted that one half of their sample had preferred sites other than their houses for executing the suicidal act. Ganapathy and Venkoba Rao (1966) in their cases of drowning pointed out that the preference was for a well in the majority, while others chose temple or public tanks or river channel. From their report, it is of interest to note that even while choosing the mode of drowning, for some, the choice has been a temple tank for this purpose. Perhaps, this might reflect the individual's desire for atonement and belief of reaching God's abode after death.

### CONCLUSION

Besides other variables, the correlates of the venue of suicidal behaviour should also be the focus of in-depth investigation in future research on suicidology.

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